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ABSTRACT

A naturalistic inquiry approach was used for the collection and interpretation of information on the 138 schools in the Portland, Oregon school system. This approach was an in-person, field based, investigative method, and was nonobtrusive. Factors studied included: description of the school and its setting; the school building and facilities; school and community; school goals; administration; curriculum and instruction; support services; and student performance. There were 25 criteria for evaluating a school. These criteria covered instructional activities and grade placement; interpersonal relationships; academic achievement measures; standards for student behavior and administrative support; community, parent, and teacher participation; and adequate educational materials and physical facilities. Characteristics of the evaluators included professional experience in education; experience with teaching materials and resources; knowledge of evaluation technique; ability to function unobstrusively and to establish good rapport with staff and students; and ability to analyze data and report findings objectively. The program process involved school selection; on-site evaluation; report preparation; and report dissemination and application. (MH)

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School Evaluation Studies in Portland, Oregon: A Naturalistic Inquiry Approach to School Evaluation[1]

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I. Overview

The Portland, Oregon, school system is made up of 138 regular, special and alternative schools. These schools vary in size from large inner city high schools to small suburban primary schools. Decisions about their operation are made by administrators and board members who must have considerable information in a data-filled brief about each one.

The request was made by the superintendent for a thumb-nail sketch of each school, plus additional information about the various programs operating in each school. What approaches are used in teaching reading? or mathematics? How much time do children have with the physical education teacher? the instumental music teacher? What instruction is available for handicapped children? for gifted children? How does the principal administer his school? work with the faculty? the community?

Since the assignment to design and implement the desired report was given to the superintendent's Evaluation Department, a further dimension seemed desirable. Could not the field work necessary to prepare the reports be used also to examine the curriculum, the school and instructional goals and processes, and the work of instructional support personnel? Could not the report, still relatively brief, be used as an instrument not only to inform decision makers but also, by making recommendations and suggestions, be used to improve the delivery system of the school to the children of its community?

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To achieve these goals and provide answers to the above questions, a naturalistic inquiry approach to the collection and interpretation of school information was selected. This in-person investigative approach, it was believed, would provide a needed context or framework within which to most appropriately interpret varied school information.

The inquiry procedures and reporting format designed to elicit the desired school information comprise the School Evaluation Studies. Two evaluation specialists were assigned to do the field work and prepare the reports. The overall plan called for the completion of a cycle of school reports in four-to-five years. The paper described here is a detailed "How do to it" manual for other evaluators interested in performing similar evaluations. To date, after four years of experience, it is possible to relate the procedures that have been successful in accomplishing the purposes. It is also possible to describe evaluator characteristics facilitative to the accomplishment of these studies.

School evaluations begin in the summer when school selections for the year's work are made. When these are approved by the Superintendent, the schedule for the year is drawn up and principals are informed when the study will be made in their schools and suggestions are given on how to prepare all personnel for the occasion. The actual field work in a school takes approximately a week, with the evaluator spending all day every day in the school, observing, interviewing, assisting teachers as an aide in the classroom, talking with students, teachers, custodians, parents. A study is made of the neighborhood, and various reports and descriptions are sought about the school and its community. Preparing the report takes another week and it includes suggestions for instructional and management improvement. Finally, after reviewing a report draft with the principal, a final report is prepared.

The completed study is distributed to the superintendent, the principal and staff, the members of the board of education and others in a position to assist in achieving the suggestions for improvement.

School Evaluation Studies made to date have been commended by curriculum and management specialists, by members of the board of education and advisory committees. More comments have been made, however, by principals

who see in them a helpful instrument in planning with faculties for school improvement.

II. Program Intent

A. Purpose

The Portland, Oregon school system is comprised of 138 regular, special and alternative schools. These schools vary in size from large inner city high schools to small suburban primary schools and are geographically widely dispersed within the 152 square mile boundary of the District. Due to the large number of schools, as well as their diversity in size and location, up to date and comprehensive information pertinent to each school's operation and the delivery of educational experiences to students was not readily available to the school superintendent, his staff and the board of education. As information of this nature was deemed necessary for appropriate decision making the superintendent charged the district's Evaluation Department with the responsibility of developing and implementing a program to elicit this information.

Specifically, the superintendent requested a thumb-nail sketch of each school, plus additional information about the various programs operating in each school. Answers were to be provided to such questions as: What approaches are used in teaching reading? or Mathematics? How much time do children have with the P.E. teacher? the instrumented music teacher? What instruction is available for handicapped children? for gifted children? How does the principal administer his/her school? work with the faculty? the community.

During the process of developing a program to respond to the superintendent's request, the Evaluation Department added a further dimension to the study. That is, it was deemed both desirable and reasonable that the field work necessary to answer the above questions could also be used to examine the curriculum, the school and instructional goals and processes, and the work of instructional support personnel. Thus, the developed school evaluation program and the reports generated thereof would be comprehensive and could be used as an instrument not only to discriptively inform District decision-makers but also,

by making recommendations and suggestions, be used to improve the delivery system of the school to the children of its community. Functioning in this manner, the School Evaluation Studies, described in detail in the following sections, endeavors to describe and assess the various essential elements inherent to efficient and effective school operation. In doing so it serves as a vehicle for educational accountability and for identifying directions for further school improvement.

B. Approach

To achieve these goals and provide answers to the above questions, a naturalistic inquiry approach to the collection and interpretation of school information was selected as the operational mode for the School Evaluation Studies. This in-person, field based, investigative approach, it was believed, would provide a needed context or framework within which to most appropriately interpret varied school information.

Specifically, the naturalistic inquiry approach was adopted because it would enable the provision of a "slice-of-life" picture of what was really happening in and around a school at a particular point in time. Further, the approach was adopted because it was virtually free of the obtrusiveness of formal measurement or preconceived questions. Thus, the approach would enable the evaluator to be as open as personally possible to the entire range of events, experiences, perceptions, etc., inherent to the school under study. Finally, the non-interventionist character of the approach would enable the evaluator to observe, describe and assess the various elements of a school and its operation as they occurred on a normal day-to-day basis.

C. Factors to be Considered

The variety of factors to be considered and examined during the process of a school evaluation study are legion. This is especially true when operating from a naturalistic inquiry approach in that additional things to consider continuously generate themselves as the study progresses. Thus an inclusive list of all such factors is not only inappropriate but probably impossible. However, as a starting point in the implementation of a school evaluation study certain factors are routinely examined. These factors are listed as follows:

1. Description of the School and its Setting

   a. School picture and general information on date built, cost, additions, etc.
   b. Location (on district and attendance area maps)
   c. Neighborhood and community
   d. Student population
   e. Staff assignment
   f. Organization for instruction

2. The School Building and Facilities

   a. Floor plan
   b. Description and evaluation of overall condition and appearance of building, facilities, and classrooms
   c. Physical features of the school and classrooms which contribute most to the educational program
   d. Physical features of the school and classrooms which contribute least to the educational program
   e. Adequacy of the maintenance program
   f. Recent improvements
   g. Improvements planned
   h. Procedures for ongoing building, facility, and classroom evaluation

3. The School and Its Community

   a. General community communications and relations
   b. Community opinion of the school
   c. Advisory Council, PTA and other parental advisory means
   d. Parent opinion of the school

4. School Goals

   a. Principal's goals; School PCO's school curriculum and instructional goals
   b. How goals are formulated? With what and whose involvement?
   c. Means to keep entire school community informed and aware of the School goals (articulation across staff)
   d. Means to evaluate progress toward School goals
   e. Means to re-evaluate and revise School goals

5. Administration

   a. Responsibilities of principal and other administrative staff
   b. Staff leadership, supervision and evaluation
   c. Curriculum leadership
   d. Supervision and management of students
   e. Business and budget management
   f. Community relations
   g. Parental involvement
   h. Facilities planning and management
   i. Areas in which administrative staff is most effective

j. Areas in which administrative staff is least effective

6. Curriculum and Instruction (for each program area where appropriate)

a. Organizational patterns (self contained, non-graded, etc.)
b. Instructional staff (composition, experience, assignments, general behavior, morale, etc.)
c. Planning (program and course goals)
d. Continuity, articulation and staff cooperation and communication
e. Teacher-child interactions
f. Materials, media, equipment and supplies
g. Student evaluation and reporting procedures
h. Procedures for diagnosing and prescribing to meet individual student needs
i. Use of community resources
m. Special Education programming
n. Gifted and Talented programming
o. Cultural and sex bias
p. Stimulants to involvement, interest and motivation
q. Procedures for curriculum and instructional evaluation and decision making
r. Community, staff and pupil involvement in determination of curriculum
s. Use of staff, aides, parents, volunteers, etc.
t. Student activities
u. Major strengths
v. Major weaknesses

7. Support Services

a. Learning media center and services
b. Learning materials, media and equipment
c. Guidance services
d. Health services
e. Services for exceptional children
f. Food, Transportation, etc., services

8. Student Performance

a. Achievement test results
b. Other student achievement indicators
c. Sample of student opinions and attitudes
d. Sample of parent opinions and attitudes

D. Evaluative Criteria

As has already been stated the intent of the School Evaluation Studies is to evaluate as well as describe a school's efforts toward the efficient and effective delivery of the highest quality educational experiences to its students. In order

for an evaluator to render such evaluations (judgments of worth, quality, etc.) specific criteria (of school and program "goodness") need to be employed.

It must be noted however, that such criteria of "goodness" are rooted in the evaluator's philosophy of education and conception of school purpose. Further, these criteria, unless stated in writing beforehand, remain locked within the head of the evaluator and unavailable to others who might wish to confirm the judgment of the original evaluator. Thus, the replicability of the study is severely jeaopardized.

Also, specification of these criteria must be broad in scope. This is necessary since the multitude of instances indicative of the underlying criteria principle, in all probability, will not, if ever, be known. The generalness of the criteria thus provides needed latitude for the inclusion of newly discovered (by the school evaluator) instances and/or examples of "good" school organization, procedure, practice, program, etc.

Finally, the list of preconceived criteria, like the list of factors to be considered presented in Part II C above, will likely be incomplete due to the continual discovery, during the process of school evaluations, of previously unthought of (again, by the evaluator) criteria. Consequently, the criteria listed below, which we have employed during the past four years, represents only a foundation upon which to begin a systematic review of a school's management, instructional, and support programs. Herein, then, lies our list of criteria for "good" schools.

1. Existence, in written form, of clearly stated school, program, and instructional goals, (including in their specification specific learning outcomes for students);
2. Comprehensive subject area coverage, at all grades, including the non-basic skill areas of Art, Music, Health, Science, Physical Education, Social Studies, Home Economics and Industrial Arts;
3. Existence of amicable relationships among and between school administrative, instructional, and non-instructional staff;
4. Continuity of instruction in each of the subject areas up through the grades;

5. Cooperative planning and instruction, on the part of the instructional staff, whenever and wherever appropriate, e.g., with multiple classes of the same subject and/or grade;
6. Student performance, on instructionally relevant standardized achievement tests, superior to district and/or national norms;
7. Existence, in written form, of established standards of appropriate student behavior;
8. Existence, in written form, of established procedures for dealing with student management problems;
9. Existence of opportunities for school staff professional growth;
10. Administrative encouragement and support for school staff initiatives with respect to the planning, development and implementation of more creative, interesting , and meaningful student instruction;
11. Administrative support for appropriate staff actions with respect to student management;
12. Existence of "enrichment", "remedial", and "special" educational opportunities for gifted, disadvantaged, and handicapped students respectively;
13. Active parent and community participation in school instructional programming as well as non-instructional activities;
14. Active teacher participation in school related decision making activities;
15. Diversity of educational offerings, especially for students in the upper grades (i.e., grades 7 and 8);
16. Existence of procedures and mechanisms for periodic and/or continuous monitoring of individual student progress;
17. Appropriate and adequate adult supervision of students in classrooms, hallways, gymnasiums, restrooms, and surrounding school grounds;
18. Existence of amicable relationships among the student body;
19. Appropriate class time scheduling and physical plant resource deployment to match requirements of particular class activities;
20. Existence of adequate educational materials, including textbooks, for all students;
21. Instructional staff thoroughly trained in the use of educational materials on hand and being employed;
22. Educational materials, including textbooks, appropriate to the functioning levels of the students with which they are employed;

23. Instructional provisions for students to progress at individual learning rates;
24. Instructional activities provide for student social-emotional development as well as academic achievement;
25. Grade organization designed to match or reflect theories and knowledge of child growth and development;
26. Employment of existent community resources and facilities to supplement and/or complement on-going instructional activities;
27. Instructional activities emphasize higher order processes (such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) in addition to rote memorization;
28. Instructional and non-instructional activities are approached enthusiastically by students and staff alike;
29. School staff evidence a real and personal interest in the everyday well being of individual students;
30. School physical plant presents a safe, comfortable, and stimulating environment conducive to the facilitation of both teaching and learning.

E. Evaluator Characteristics

After four years experience and 66 school evaluations completed the essential characteristics or qualifications facilitative to the most successful accomplishment of these studies is readily apparent. These characteristics are as follows:

1. Several years experience in a school as teacher, principal, curriculum specialist or special teacher — enough to know how a school operates, where problems can be in the community, the faculty or the management;
2. Experience with textbooks, systems of teaching, equipment, district and area resources, availability of in-service for teachers;
3. Knowledge of evaluation techniques, interview procedures, goal-based management and instruction;
4. Ability to examine the functioning of a school in an unobtrusive manner and to relate easily and positively (i.e., interact in a non-threatening, supportive fashion) to staff and students;

5. Ability to analyze what is said and observed and willingness to report conclusions succinctly, fairly and fearlessly.

With respect to the above characteristics, the evaluator's past experience has perhaps pre-ordinant importance to the successful accomplishment of the study. Specifically, it is precisely this experience which initially establishes the evaluator's credibility with the school staff. This past experience, in essence says "I've been there, I know what it's like, so trust me and I'll do right by you". Without the establishment of this credibility at the outset of the study the school staff may be reluctant to reveal to the evaluator his/her knowledge and/or opinion regarding the operation of the school and what it's really like to work there. Subsequently, during the process of the study, the evaluator enhances or at least substantiates this credibility, by demonstrating to the staff (in the professional manner in which he/she goes about his/her investigation) that he/she knows his/her business and is good at it.

Perhaps the second most important of the above listed characteristics is the evaluators ability to examine the workings of the school without interfering with its normal operation and without upsetting either students or staff. To the extent the evaluator is not able to maintain this posture he/she will not be able to obtain a true picture of what the school is really like.

Finally, a sixth characteristic which has proved, in the past, facilitative to the successful accomplishment of these studies, but which has also, depending upon how it's handled, the potential for disaster is the evaluator's prior acquaintance with principal and/or staff at the school under study. On the positive side, by establishing the evaluator in advance as a "nice or OK guy" such prior acquaintance may serve to lessen staff apprehension about the process and results of the study. On the negative side however, by bringing to the fore established friendships, prior acquaintance with staff may compromise the evaluator's judgment, distort the evaluator's observations and dilute the evaluator's justifiable criticisms. Consequently, if handled appropriately, the evaluator may use his/her prior acquaintances to great advantage.

III. Program Processes

A. School Selection

The year's work in School Evaluation Studies begins in the summer with the selection of schools. It has been our policy to check first with the Oregon Department of Education to see which schools in Portland will be involved with school accreditation review visits. Although their accreditation studies are not similar to our evaluation studies, avoiding upsetting the school with two on-site reviews is desirable. We also avoid setting up an evaluation in a school where there is a new principal or a new complex administrative arrangement or a complex new program. It is our belief that a principal should have at least a year to establish his management style since to a great extent a School Evaluation Study is an evaluation of the educational environment established and maintained by the school principal. We also feel that it would be unfair to evaluate a school which has just been changed from a K-8 school to a primary school or a middle school since the principal and school staff may not have had sufficient time to stabilize organizational and programming changes.

The first selection of schools to study for the year based on the above criteria is submitted to the district superintendent and the appropriate area superintendents (superintendents of the three sub-districts of the system). Discussion is invited and adjustments based on the particular desires and/or needs of area superintendents are made as needed. For example, comprehensive information may be needed about a particular school or series of schools so that appropriate decisions can be made with respect to desegregation plans, boundary changes and/or grade reorganization. Sometimes, adjustments are made in the schedule because, in the opinion of the superintendent, the prevailing conditions in a particular school would not be conclusive to such a study. However, for just the same reasons a school might be added to the schedule. Once the list for the year is established the area superintendent informs the principals in his area of the selection, the evaluator meets with the principals to provide an overview of the study program and a calendar is prepared for the year.

During the course of the year, two weeks prior to each evaluation, the principal is reminded by personal phone call and memo to the school staff of the

date of the impending school study and is asked to be ready to supply certain data and documents when the evaluation begins. He/she is also asked to schedule a faculty meeting, if one is not already scheduled, on the first day of the evaluation study, to alert teachers to the fact that an observer will be in their classrooms, to assure them that the study does not evaluate teachers (that is the sole responsibility of the principal), and to prepare them for the evaluator's need to interview all or selected representative faculty members.

When school selection is complete, the evaluator begins to gather information about each school. A file is developed for each one and as usable notes about schools come to hand they are dropped into the files. Newspaper articles, items from board of education minutes, names of people living in various communities, information from Title I, IV, VII evaluators, vandalism records from the investigator's office, fuel usage data, maintenance and construction records, all such information is acquired.

Standard sources are also examined. These include enrollment reports published annually by the district's Management Information Department which include the total enrollment, grade size, class size, minority enrollment and enrollment history of each district school. Examined also is Profiles of Portland Public Schools, (published by the district's Public Information Department) a small pamphlet with very brief physical description, including a picture, and a few sentences about programs in each school. Another important source of information is Achievement Profiles, Portland Public Schools, Oregon until recently an annually revised publication of the district's Evaluation Department. This publication contains information about students' measured performance on city-wide achievement tests and information on school and community factors such as pupil/teacher ratio, percent student mobility, percent student attendance, percent children in welfare families, percent free lunches served, percent husband-wife families, median grade completed for adults 25 years and older, median family income and other relevant data. One other publication is very useful although 12 years old. That is the School Building Study of 1967, a two volume study of each school's grounds, rooms and facilities with projections and recommendations for improvement.

B. On-Site Evaluation Procedures

After initial field experience in making several pilot studies, we have learned to allot two full weeks for an evaluation of an average size (450 - 650 students) K-8 or middle school (grades 5-8 or 6-8) and somewhat less for a smaller primary school. The first week in an average school is spent totally in the school, morning till night, five days and sometimes one or two more the next week. All the necessary data is obtained and impressions developed from observations and interviews. The following week is spent in writing the first draft of the report and going over it with the principal.

Each week's work generally follows the pattern described here although the variations due to individual circumstances are endless. On Monday, the evaluator meets with the principal (always at his/her convenience, but preferably in the A.M.) and converses about the school and the community. At that time the principal supplies the various brochures, publications, school policies, teacher and class lists for the evaluator's later reading. The evaluator meets the secretary and other support personnel and often a parent or two who happen to be in the building at the time. A few teachers are met briefly in a tour of the building, arrangements are made to have lunch with teachers in the cafeteria and the groundwork is laid for the rest of the week.

Early afternoon on Monday is spent in visiting the kindergarten if there is one, and possibly a first grade provided the evaluator, during the morning's activities has been personally introduced to these teachers. It is very seldom, if ever, prudent to enter a classroom unbeknown and unannounced to the teacher and perhaps catching him/her by surprise. In a full elementary school the desire is to observe classes and talk with teachers beginning with the earliest classes, working up through the grades to finish with the 6-8 th grades on Thursday and Friday. This routine permits the evaluator to get a sense of the continuity of instruction up through the grades. An important Monday event is the meeting with the entire faculty after school. As noted earlier, two weeks ahead of the meeting a memo is sent explaining the purpose of the evaluation and attempting to alleviate tensions related to it. Nevertheless, it is generally helpful to talk about the evaluation, explain how it is done, say something about who gets it,

and invite questions. It has proven to be a helpful practice also to bring along samples of evaluations of other schols to leave in the faculty room for the staff to read.

At the faculty meeting teachers are assured that they are not personally being evaluated and that nothing about them will be put in their personnel files stemming from the evaluation study. Teachers are also told that they can ask the evaluator not to visit, if it is inconvenient for any reason, when he/she walks in. The teachers are asked if they mind the evaluator performing as a teacher's aide while in the classroom and they always readily agree. Helping children with their work is an excellent way to get clues to the nature of instruction and a chance to examine textbooks and other instructional systems. This action-type observation technique also is less disturbing to teachers than silent sitting. Moreover, assisting the teacher in the classroom develops more opportunities to talk to the teacher and the children.

Throughout the remainder of the week classes are visited in sequence. The principal has earlier told teachers to have their schedules, program goals and daily objectives at hand for the evaluator and these are perused. In examining these materials the evaluator looks for subject area average as well as clear statement of intended student learning outcomes. During the classroom observation the evaluator takes few notes, usually only the names of books, some particularly interesting goals, or upcoming events to remember, as this activity tends to be distracting to some students and staff. Also the teacher is permitted to review these notes if desired. None have ever done so. Immediately upon leaving the classroom however, the evaluator records his/her impressions and any other thoughts relevant to the operation of the classroom in particular or the school in general. With respect to interviewing school staff, the evaluator may make formal arrangements to meet with staff members individually or in small groups before school, at noon, or after school and use a prepared list of questions to ask or the evaluator may wish to drop in on teachers at breaks, in their planning periods, after school while they are finishing up the day, and have informal conversations. Both techniques have been employed in the past and appear to be equally effective.

As the week progresses some teachers invite the evaluator to special events; the principal suggests attending a parent meeting; children say, "Why

don't you come to our game? or our band practice? or our student meeting?" All such invitations are snapped up as particularly valuable opportunities to get a "feel" for the school.

Upper grade children, particularly, are observed in two or more settings if possible. They are seen in their homeroom if they have one, and in the gymnasium or shop or music class. Younger children are observed in the classrooms and outdoors at their active periods. Care is taken to know about and visit any special classes which are a part of the school or housed in the school. Attention is paid to programs for minority children, gifted children, retarded and emotionally handicapped children. Practice and attitudes relative to equal rights for girls and boys are also noted.

The strength of the instructional program and the total delivery system of the school to bring about learning is the heart of the evaluation. The understanding by the total staff of the dimensions of the entire system, the vision they have of what a student should know and can do on completing the eight or nine years, the grasp they have of the part each plays in this effort, all these concerns are the major concern of the evaluator. The search for completeness and balance in the instructional program becomes the evaluator's task. Are children being given the skills needed to achieve, to live, to compete, to expand? Are they provided with the opportunity to study humanity, its growth and development, its conflicts and achievements, its arts and conversations? Are they given the chance and the encouragement to value truth, honesty, compassion, and to achieve self respect and dignity? These are some of the questions which are before the evaluator as the school is observed. Finding evidence pertinent to these questions is beyond the realm of standard tests and questionnaires but is possible for the experienced evaluator to see—or at least to feel.

The evaluation is not complete without talks with some parents, including if possible, P.T.A. members, advisory committee members, and others assisting at the school and/or attending school activities. Also, as the functioning of the school depends very strongly on the secretary and other clerks, on the custodian and on the cafeteria workers; all of these people should have a chance to contribute to the picture of the school.

By the time the first week is over the evaluator has many pieces of information, some solid data, some impressions, many notes made after visits to classrooms, at noon and after school hours, and is ready to put the week's work into writing.

C. Report Preparation

The School Evaluation Studies report is organized into seven (7) sections: School Pictorial Information, General School Information, School Administration/Management, Instructional Program, Student Basic Skill Achievement, Summary and Suggestions, Appendix (Optional). Also, preceding the main body of the report is a Table of Contents and a Prologue page. This latter page presents, to the reader, a three paragraph explanation of the intent, focus, and process of the School Evaluation Studies and thereby sets the tone for the report to follow.

Section I, School Pictorial Information, is usually comprised of three pages. Page 1 contains a picture of the school and summary inforamtion about the school, including school name and address, grades taught, administrative and high school area, principal's name, instructional staff, in terms of F.T.E. (Full Time Equivalents) and total enrollment. Page 2 is a pictorial display of the school's current attendance boundaries and page 3 is a diagram of the schools floor plan with individual grade classrooms, special instructional areas, and offices identified. This "school map" helps their reader get a feeling for where things are in the school and thus a better understanding as to why the school functions (as described in later sections) as it does.

Section II, General School Information, includes five subsections: Location and Neighborhood, Building Conditions and Facilities, Parent and Community Involvement, Student Involvement, and Student Enrollment.

The Location and Neighborhood section places the school geographically in relation to the city as a whole and gives a word picture of the residential and business areas of the community. It also mentions educational resources for instruction such as streams, parks, museums and public libraries, and such hazards as heavy traffic street crossings.

The Building Condition and Facilities section provides information on maintenance problems, wiring, plumbing and heating systems, particularly excellent or deficient rooms or facilities, and fuel usage and vandalism records if either seem unusual.

The Parent and Community Involvement section describes P.T.A., advisory committee, parent volunteer and other community actitivies in support of the school's education program.

The Student Involvement section describes student councils, students as tutors, the safety patrol and other student help in the office or anywhere else in the school.

Finally, the Student Enrollment section describes various student characteristics such as percent student mobility, attendance, children in welfare families, and free lunches served as well as the ethnic composition of the student body. In addition, this section displays, in tablular form, student enrollment by grade and section including special achievement classes and/or other instructional arrangements. This enrollment table is particularly useful in enhancing the visibility of split grade classes which usually have significant affect upon classroom instructional programming and related activities.

Section III, School Administration/Management, also includes five subsections. These are: Administration, School Goals, Program Change Objectives, Instructional Staff, and Support Personnel.

The Administration section describes the on-going administration and management of the school. Preeminent here is the effectiveness of the varied efforts of the school principal and his/her administrative staff. These efforts generally include school/community relationships; evaluation and, to some degree, selection of staff; professional growth of staff; development of curriculum and instructional program; assessment of educational trends; setting a positive school climate; management of students; and routine building and fiscal management.

The School Goals section lists and describes major school goals and current progress toward their accomplishment. These goals usually have been formulated to guide the principal's and the staff's efforts in the processes of program assessment and revision. In many instances the statement of these goals clarify and/or develop specific directions for school improvement.

The Program Change Objectives section is similar to the preceding section in that it lists and describes specific Program Change Objectives (PCO's) and progress toward their accomplishment. Program change objectives, it should be noted are relatively small (≤ $1000) projects funded by the school administrative area to develop a procedure or to accomplish something designed by one or more teachers intended to improve the school in some way. Usually, PCO's are developed to directly support the accomplishment of specific school goals.

The Instructional Support section describes various staff characteristics including the number of homeroom teachers, full and part-time specialists (such as for P.E., Music, Art, etc.) and the balance of tenured and probationary teachers. In addition, description is also provided of the manner in which the staff is organized for instruction (i.e., self-contained classes, separate subject teachers, grade groupings, etc.) and the effects of such organization. This section also displays, in tabular form, the specific F.T.E. teaching assignments with a summary of associated instructional organization for each of the grades and special subject areas.

Finally, the Support Personnel section details, in tabular form, the various support personnel serving the school including specific F.T.E. assignments. Additionally, assignment of responsibility for coordination of the support staff and the services they provide as well as the effectiveness of the support services rendered to the ongoing instructional program is described and commented upon.

Section IV, Instructional Program, is comprised of brief although comprehensive descriptions of the various instructional programs being implemented at the school. Usually 10 programs are described: Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Physical Education, Health, Art, Music, Science, Home Economics and Industrial Arts. The descriptions of each of these subject areas include reference to materials employed, cooperative teaching arrangements, cross-grade ability grouping, combinations of subjects (e.g., health and science) peculiarities of operation, etc. This section and the descriptions included therein, is particularly important in that it represents the "essence" of the school's daily instructional program. Specifically, the program descriptions convey, to the reader, a "sense" of the nature, quantity and most importantly, quality of the educational experiences and opportunities being made available to the school's student population. This section, then, perhaps more than any other answers two of the questions frequently asked about a school by educators and layman alike: What is being taught? How is it being taught?

Section V, Student Basic Skill Achievement, reports in tabular form, current and longitudinal (most recent 5-year period) student performance on district-wide achievement tests in the basic skills of Reading and Math. Specifically, students' average performance, in terms of standard scores ($\bar{x}$ = 50, SD = 10) is displayed for each of the various grade levels tested. Further, interpretation of these test data is provided with respect to the following five criteria:

1. extent above or below district and/or national averages;
2. extent increasing or decreasing over recent 5-year period
3. extent superior performance in one subject area versus the other;
4. extent a particular grade or grades superior to other grades or superior in one subject area versus the other;
5. extent consistent with school and community indicators such as percent student mobility, attendance, children in welfare families, and free lunches served.

This section, therefore supplements, to a limited extent, the program descriptions provided in the preceding section. That is, with respect to the basic skill areas of Reading and Math, it addresses another frequently asked question: How well are the students learning what is being taught?

Section VI, Summary and Suggestions ties together the various pieces of information presented throughout the report and presents in relatively few paragraphs a concise review of the major characteristics of the school, its program, and its operation and building upon these findings sets forth suggestions intended to stimulate discussion and planning aimed at effecting school improvements.

Suggestions which are made almost invariably relate directly to instruction or the organization of the school to effect instruction. Almost never are recommendations made relating to needs of the physical plant or to any kind of construction or capital expenditure. The district maintenance people can be expected to know the physical needs of each building and will get to them as quickly as availability of funds will allow. It must be noted however, that if the evaluator sees a hazardous condition, a broken window in a bathroom, an inoperable crash bar on a door, a dangerous electrical outlet, he/she will be on the phone to back up the principal in requests to the maintenance department for immediate repairs. This kind of action eliminates from the suggestion section the nitty-gritty of daily operations and enables the evaluator to concentrate on those needs which call for long-range planning and cooperation by the faculty and the administrator.

In general, suggestions made in the report fall into the following four categories:

1) adding strength to the goal basis of all programs, i.e., asking and answering the question "What do we want these children to know or know how to do when they complete their years here?";
2) providing remedies for weak or non-existing programs;
3) giving attention to needed continuity in courses which appear to be insufficiently related from grade to grade; and,
4) calling attention to needed in-service work for groups of teachers or entire faculties.

Finally, each of the suggestions presented states directly what change is being recommended, why the change is being recommended and one or more ways in which the recommended change might be implemented.

Finally, Section VII, Appendix, may be added to the report if unique, or at least particularly interesting and/or informative forms, procedures, materials, instruments, etc., have been referenced earlier in the main body of the report. Documents illustrating student progress reporting systems or subject area scope and sequence guides might therefore be included, especially if there exists a potential for the adoption of these materials at other schools.

D. Report Dissemination and Application

Preparation of the School Evaluation Studies report, in draft form, comprising the various information outlined above, occurs during the week (usually an entire week is required) immediately following the school visitation. The evaluator reviews this draft with the school principal, makes appropriate revisions/additions (based on the principal's review) which add to the accuracy of the representation of the functioning of the school, and prepares the final report. Copies of this completed study are then produced and distributed to district personnel in administrative and support positions having the responsibility for school supervision.

Included among the report recipients are the district superintendent and his staff, the area superintendent (within whose jurisdiction the school resides) and his staff, members of the board of education, and the school principal and his/her staff. Additional copies of the study are sent to the principal, with the recommendation that he/she distribute the report to members of the school P.T.A. and advisory groups. It is further suggested that the principal discuss with these groups the information contained in the report thereby enhancing community awareness of the school's functioning and facilitating school/community communication and subsequent actions to be taken, if any, with respect to the schools on-going operation and program.

Since the inception of the School Evaluation Studies program the resulting reports have been well received by all recipient groups. More importantly the reports have been considered helpful tools in planning and implementing school improvements. Specifically, management and curriculum specialists have found these reports to provide information needed to facilitate decisions concerning staff (both administrative and instructional) reassignments and curriculum

development. Further, school principals have found these reports to be especially helpful in planning with faculties for local school improvement. For example, as a result of information revealed in these reports in-service training programs for teachers, aides and other instructional support personnel have been implemented and PCO's, addressing particular instructional program deficiencies, have been developed. Finally, school principals have found these reports to be useful vehicles through which to share school information with the community they serve.

In light of the above the School Evaluation Studies program, to date, has fulfilled its intended purpose of monitoring the efforts school personnel are making in the interest of students and providing the superintendent and other district administrative and supervisory personnel with comprehensive information concerning school program and management status.